

# TRF Newsletter

## Summer Time is Here Again!

Here at The Riordan Foundation summer is a time for reflection and an opportunity to prepare for upcoming grant cycles, but before the final bell we want to share a few of our recent projects with you.

## Sparking Teacher Innovation

Design thinking shapes our everyday lives, from the iPhone we use to make calls to our shopping experience at the store. Design thinking is a process by which designers seek to create products and services that improve the end users' experience. When applied to schools, teachers have the opportunity to design for their students and create solutions that will enhance the learning experience.

In efforts to support teacher-led designs, The Riordan Foundation hosted over 50 teachers as they participated in TrueSchool Studio's Spark workshop. As an introduction to design thinking, teachers were tasked with redesigning the daily commute for one of their colleagues. To understand the needs, wants, and interests of their partners, teachers conducted short interviews. Based off of the information gained, they then created a vision for their partners and sketched potential ideas for a better commuting experience. After sketching four possibilities for improvement and capturing feedback, participants then selected one big idea to create a representative, physical prototype. The prototyping phase created a unique opportunity for teachers to exercise creativity and refine their proposals.

At the conclusion of the experience, teachers discussed how they could use the same process at their schools to create a more student-centered learning environment. Teachers were specifically keen on the idea of interviewing students in an effort to truly understand how they experience the classroom.

The Riordan Foundation will offer further professional development opportunities in the fall and looks forward to supporting teachers with the implementation of their designs through the Instructional Innovation Grant.



Above: Educators choose physical prototyping materials as part of the design process at the TrueSchool Studio Spark workshop

Below: Partners share their ideas for improving each other's daily commutes and receive feedback



## Instructional Innovation Grant Winners Announced

More than thirty schools submitted Letters of Inquiry for the Instructional Innovation Grant, fifteen were invited to apply, and we are now happy to announce the six recipient schools for 2015: Camino Nuevo Miramar High School, El Dorado Elementary, Math and Science College Prep, Mill School & Technology Academy, Mountain View High School, and St. Mary's Academy in partnership with Grace Hopper STEM Academy.

Projects in this cycle include engineering curriculum implementations, an integrated technology garden project, and Reader's Workshop coaching among others. Winning schools have until September 4<sup>th</sup> to raise their challenge portion, which is 50% of the total project cost. We are incredibly excited to be a part of the amazing services these schools offer to their students and we look forward to seeing these projects in action.

While we congratulate the recipient schools, we would also like to acknowledge all the schools that applied for this grant; we are inspired by the effort you put into securing resources for your students and hope to partner in the future!

The next cycle of the Instructional Innovation Grant will start in September with awareness sessions. If you would like to receive an email when dates and locations are announced, please send your contact information to [contact@riordanfoundation.org](mailto:contact@riordanfoundation.org). As always, we will keep you updated as these projects develop and are happy to connect educators who are interested in pursuing similar programs.



Students at Riordan Primary welcome Mayor Riordan to their classroom with high fives.



Mayor Riordan reads a story to a class of kindergarteners at Riordan Primary Center

## Riordan Primary Gets a Special Visitor

On Monday, June 1<sup>st</sup> students at Richard Riordan Primary Center in Highland Park were surprised with a special visit from the school's namesake himself, Mayor Riordan! Mayor spent the morning with the students, reading to the kindergarteners and listening to the first graders read compositions of their own. He also spent some time on the playground, dispensing high fives and trading jokes.

Principal Marilee Wood hosted the visit and provided Mayor Riordan with a tour of the campus. She gave special attention to the computer lab that The Riordan Foundation partially funded in 2013. Students use the school computers for literacy and math software programs as well as for basic computer literacy practice.

The students loved meeting the man whose name adorns their school and fun was had all around!

